

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 171

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend gospel saxophonist Kirk Whalum upon winning a Grammy award.

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this General Assembly should pay homage to those inspirational artists who perform pure and passionate gospel music; and

WHEREAS, Kirk Whalum is an exemplary saxophonist who has inspired and uplifted audiences with his unique musical style for decades and, in February 2011, he won his first Grammy at the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Grammy awards; and

WHEREAS, born in Memphis on July 11, 1958, Kirk Whalum grew up in the R&B capital of the South and came from a family of musicians, including his father, a singer in a church choir, his grandmother, who was a piano teacher, and two uncles, who performed with jazz bands across the country; and

WHEREAS; Mr. Whalum began singing in his father's church choir in his youth, inspired by the rich musical traditions of the city in which he was raised, which included gospel, R&B, blues, and eventually jazz music; and

WHEREAS, he attended Melrose High School and received a scholarship to attend music school at Texas Southern University, where he formed a band in 1979 and began playing at local clubs; and

WHEREAS, when jazz pianist Bob James first heard Kirk Whalum play in Houston, Texas, Mr. James brought him on tour and invited him to play on his new album in 1984, which led to a record deal for Kirk with Columbia Records, with whom he released his first solo album, *Floppy Disk*, in 1985, which was produced by Mr. James; and

WHEREAS, Mr. James continued his fruitful partnership with Kirk Whalum and produced his next two albums, *And You Know That!*, which was released in 1988, and *The Promise*,

which was released in 1989; and

WHEREAS, Kirk Whalum released another two albums with Columbia Records, *Caché* in 1993 and *In This Life* in 1995, each of which earned Mr. Whalum increasing commercial attention and critical praise; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, a duet with Mr. James titled “Joined at the Hip” took Kirk Whalum’s career to new heights with his first Grammy award nomination and, in 1997, he signed with Warner Bros. Records, releasing his first solo album with them, *Colors*, that same year, an album which showcased his ability to produce a fusion of pop, jazz, and R&B music; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Mr. Whalum released *Gospel According to Jazz Chapter 1*, which gave voice to the musical roots from which he stemmed, while also pursuing the kind of spiritual depth that has a long history in jazz in taking advantage of the saxophone’s unique expressive qualities; and

WHEREAS, the 1990s brought Kirk Whalum a diverse and successful series of session and touring jobs with numerous artists, including Barbra Streisand, Luther Vandross, Yolanda Adams, and Whitney Houston, whose hit song “I Will Always Love You,” from the movie *The Body Guard*, showcased a saxophone solo from Mr. Whalum; and

WHEREAS, the fan base which Mr. Whalum had steadily built in the 1980s and 1990s exploded with the release of his second 1998 album, *For You*, which spent nearly two years at the top of the Billboard Contemporary Jazz Chart, and yielded four Top Ten New Adult Contemporary hits; and

WHEREAS, he followed up that success with the release of his self-produced album, *Hymns in the Garden*, in 2000, an album which earned Mr. Whalum his second Grammy nomination, and he has continued to release numerous successful albums over the course of the last decade; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Whalum is the recipient of numerous awards and acknowledgements for his musical excellence, including three Dove Award nominations, a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Image Award nomination, and he has won two Stellar Awards, which are considered gospel music’s highest honor; and

WHEREAS, he is an eleven-time Grammy award nominee and, in February 2011, he was nominated in four categories at the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual Grammy awards, at which he earned his first-ever Grammy, winning the award with Jerry Peters in the category of Best Gospel Song for “It’s What I Do,” which was performed with Lalah Hathaway on Mr. Whalum’s most recent album, *The Gospel According to Jazz Chapter III*, which was released in 2010; and

WHEREAS, an ordained minister, Kirk Whalum is pursuing a Master of Arts degree in religion, and he serves his community with acumen and alacrity, graciously donating his time and talents to performing at nursing homes, schools, and missions; and

WHEREAS, he reads the Bible in a daily fifteen-minute podcast called “Bible in Your Ear,” and he shares his passion for educating young aspiring musicians by serving as the President and Chief Executive Officer of the STAX Music Academy and the STAX Museum of American Soul Music in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, it is most fitting that this General Assembly pause in its deliberations to specially commend Kirk Whalum for spreading the Good News of the Gospel through his inspiring brand of gospel music, for entertaining his faithful fans, and for sharing his talents and his pure love of music with the world for more than thirty years; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Kirk Whalum, one of gospel music’s most talented musicians, upon winning his first Grammy award, recognize his ongoing legacy of creating beautiful music with an inspirational message, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success in all his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.